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Health  
Canada

Santé  
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# Is Your Child Safe?



**Y**our home is a place where your child is safe from harm – or should be. Children are curious and cannot easily recognize and avoid hazards; therefore, they need extra protection and care. Many burns, poisonings and falls can be avoided. By supervising your children carefully and making their surroundings safe, you can prevent injuries.

Canada

## TOYS

Canadian consumers spend approximately \$1.3 billion a year on toys. It is important to know that no matter how much safety is built into a toy, supervision, proper use and maintenance of toys are essential.

- *Select only toys suitable for the child's age group, and make sure to read and follow all instructions that come with the toy.*
- *Toys with small parts are dangerous for children under three years. Keep them out of their reach.*
- *Check toys regularly and throw away broken toys which may have sharp edges.*
- *Keep plush toys and soft toys away from stoves, fireplaces, heaters and other sources of heat.*

### Toy Boxes

- *Make sure that large toy boxes have good ventilation in case a child climbs inside.*
- *Choose toy boxes with lids that are lightweight and have good supporting hinges;*



heavy lids have fallen on children's necks causing death.

- *Toy boxes should be inspected regularly to ensure the hinges are secure and well-maintained.*



### Balloons

Although balloons are not toys, children do play with them. It is dangerous for a child to play with broken balloons or deflated balloons. Throw away pieces of broken balloons.

- *Always blow up balloons for children and supervise children playing with balloons.*

### Toys with Batteries

- *Make sure batteries in toys for young children are properly installed and not accessible to the child.*
- *It is dangerous to mix older batteries with newer ones, or to mix alkaline with carbon, or rechargeable with non-rechargeable.*
- *A child should not take battery-operated toys to bed.*
- *If a child swallows a button battery, call your doctor or poison control centre immediately.*



## BABY WALKERS

Babies in walkers can move quickly, run into hidden dangers, bump into furniture, pull on hanging appliance cords and tip over. Falls downstairs in walkers are the largest cause of head injuries in children under the age of two. Babies in walkers should be watched at all times. If you decide to use a baby walker, ensure that it fully meets the requirements of the Canadian Juvenile Products Association's Voluntary Safety Standard for baby walkers.

because the lap belt was not properly fastened, or children were left unattended – for just a moment!

- ◆ Choose a sturdy stroller that is recommended for your child's weight and height.
- ◆ Make sure that the lap belt is solidly attached to the seat or frame of the stroller. The seat should not pull away from the frame, even if you pull sharply on the lap belt.
- ◆ Always use the harness or lap belt.
- ◆ Use the brakes and make sure the wheels are fixed tightly.
- ◆ Before making adjustments to the stroller, ensure that the child's hands and feet are clear.
- ◆ Do not carry additional children, goods or accessories in or on the stroller except as recommended in the manufacturer's instructions.
- ◆ Do not use a stroller on an escalator.

## STROLLERS

Many children are injured in baby stroller and carriage incidents





## CRIBS

Older cribs manufactured before September 1986 do not meet government safety regulations and should not be used. It is illegal to sell or advertise these cribs. However, they are often sold at garage sales and flea markets, or found in cottages or relatives' homes. The date of manufacture must appear on post-1986 cribs. You can be confident that new cribs sold in stores meet safety regulations.

- Mattresses that are too soft or worn down in any area could cause a gap or hollow where a baby's head could become trapped causing the child to suffocate. Mattresses should fit snugly on all sides of the crib.
- The mattress should not be more than 15 cm thick. It should have a firm surface. Space between the mattress and the sides of the crib should not be more than 3 cm. Measure this by pushing the mattress into one corner.
- The mattress support system is designed to hold the mattress firmly in place. To make sure that the support is secure, shake the crib from side to side, thump the mattress from the top, and push up hard on the mattress support from underneath.
- After placing your baby in the crib, ensure the sides are locked securely in position.
- Babies should never be harnessed or tied in a crib, and should not be left in a crib with a necklace, elastic band, scarf, or a pacifier on a long cord that could cause strangulation.
- As soon as your baby is able to stand, ensure the mattress is at its lowest position and remove bumper pads and large toys that could serve as steps to climb out with risk of fall and injury.
- Keep the crib away from window curtain or blind cords. The baby's neck could become entangled in one of the cords or strings, resulting in strangulation.
- For greater safety, do not place a baby under two years of age on an adult bed without adult supervision. Never place a baby on a water bed.



## HIGH CHAIRS

Many children are injured by falling from high chairs or sliding under the tray. In most instances, injuries can be prevented if the harness or belt is properly used and the child is closely supervised.

- A safe chair is stable and has a wide base to reduce the risk of tipping.
- The harness should consist of a strap which fits between the child's legs and a waist belt that is easy to fasten and kept in good condition.
- Set up and maintain the high chair as recommended by the manufacturer.

- Ensure that the child's hands, arms and legs are clear of any moving parts before making adjustments to the chair or the tray.
- Never allow older children to climb onto the chair.
- Keep the chair a safe distance away from walls, doors, windows, blind cords, mirrors, appliances and other furniture.

## CHANGE TABLES

When using a change table, remember that in the moment it takes you to reach for something, your baby can roll over and fall.

- \* Change tables should have straps to help keep the baby in place while being dressed.
- \* If you are interrupted by the telephone or doorbell, or for any other reason, always take the child with you.







- An infant carrier is not a car seat and must never be used as one.
- Fasten straps and restraining buckles every time you use the seat. They should be adjusted to fit comfortably and prevent the child from turning in the seat. Crossed straps should be placed low enough to avoid the infant's neck, even if the infant slips down in the seat.
- Adult beds, especially water beds, and other surfaces that are not completely firm, should not be used as a base or resting place for infant carriers.
- Never leave a child alone in an infant carrier, even when it seems safe.

## BUNK BEDS

Of course bunk beds can be a great way to save space in your home but they can also be dangerous! The upper bed of bunk beds is hazardous when used for children under six. A number of deaths have been reported in Canada since 1985 involving children under six placed in the upper bunk. Typically, the children suffocated when their bodies slipped between the guard rail and the mattress. Their faces became stuck against the mattress. In another case, a two-year old suffocated when he became wedged between the upper bunk and the wall. The upper edge of the top rail should be at least 13 cm above the mattress. The distance from the frame to

the bottom edge of the lower rail should not be more than 9 cm. The Product Safety Bureau has received complaints from parents who noticed that the welds were cracking on their tubular metal bunk beds. In some cases, the beds collapsed and children were injured.

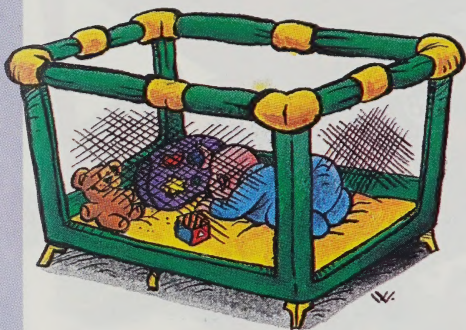


- ♦ The upper bunk should never be used for children under six.
- ♦ Make sure the upper bunk has guard rails on all sides.
- ♦ Mattresses should fit snugly on all sides leaving no gaps between the mattress and the sides of the bed.

## SAFETY GATES

Some gates manufactured before 1990 do not meet safety regulations and should not be used. These gates have wide V-shaped openings along the top or large diamond-shaped openings along the sides.

- ✱ When buying a used gate, make sure that it does not have any openings that could trap a child's head or neck. Select a gate that is recommended for the child's age.
- ✱ Gates should be installed following the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✱ Always attach the gate securely in the doorway or passage.



## PLAYPENS

If purchasing a used playpen, make sure the sides are made of mosquito-type netting. If the mesh is larger, buttons or hooks on clothing could get caught. Sides must be firm and sturdy and should be checked regularly for damage.

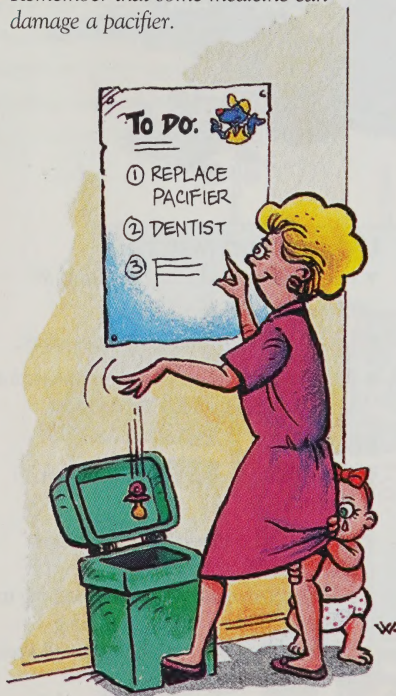
- Avoid playpens that have sharp edges or hinges that can pinch fingers.
- Make sure side latches are in their fully closed position when setting up a playpen.
- Never leave an infant in a drop-sided playpen with the side down; the infant can roll into the space between the mattress and the mesh side and suffocate.
- Never put scarves, necklaces or cords in the playpen or around a child's neck. These items can catch and strangle a child.
- Vinyl rails of playpens or mattress pads with tears can be dangerous. A child can bite off small pieces and choke.
- Remove toys strung across a playpen when your child begins to push up on hands and knees. Toys the child can use as steps to climb out should also be removed.



## PACIFIERS

A pacifier can quickly become a child's most precious possession.

- *Never tie a pacifier or any other object around a baby's neck. Infants can strangle when cords are tied around their necks.*
- *A teething ring should be used instead of a pacifier if the baby starts to chew on the pacifier. When a baby chews on a pacifier, it could get stuck in the throat.*
- *Changes in texture, tears or holes can appear with age, heat, exposure to food and sunlight. Pacifiers should be changed every two months rather than waiting for signs of breakdown.*
- *Remember that some medicine can damage a pacifier.*



## HOOK-ON CHAIRS

Hook-on chairs clamp onto the edge of a table. Be sure they are strong and securely attached.

- *The chair should be equipped with a harness or lap belt that is easy to fasten, and kept in good condition.*
- *Not all tables can be used to attach a hook-on chair.*
- *When attaching the chair to the table, place the chair away from table legs, so the child cannot push with his/her feet and knock the chair off the table.*

## CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Be careful when using loose-fitting cotton and cotton-blend homemade sleepwear for children. Cotton and cotton-blend fabrics will catch fire and burn more quickly than most synthetics. Nylon and polyester are more difficult to set on fire and burn more slowly. Snug-fitting clothing is safer than clothing with flowing skirts, wide sleeves or large ruffles.

- ◆ *Parents should dress their children in proper sleepwear as opposed to T-shirts or other day clothes when putting children to bed.*
- ◆ *Drawstrings or cords on children's clothing should be removed. Children can strangle when drawstrings and cords get caught around their neck or on other objects.*
- ◆ *Check blankets and sleepers regularly for loose threads and fix them immediately. Nylon threads can wrap around a baby's finger or neck and cause injury.*

## BURNS

Every year in Canada, severe injuries and deaths occur as a result of burns and scalds. Usually, it's children's curiosity that gets them into trouble. They come across a lighter or matches or they manage to get too close to a baseboard heater or the hot element of a stove.



### Burns from hot liquids:

- ▼ Test the water temperature before allowing your child to get into the bathtub or shower. Always turn cold water on first, then add hot water.
- ▼ Children should not play with a hot water tap.
- ▼ Avoid carrying or holding children while you are drinking hot beverages.

### Burns from household appliances:

- ▼ Turn pot handles towards the centre of the stove.
- ▼ Keep cords for electrical appliances such as deep fryers, kettles, steam irons and toasters out of the reach of children.
- ▼ Supervise children near lamps with accessible hot light bulbs.

- ▼ Store items that interest children, such as cookies, away from the immediate area around the kitchen stove.
- ▼ Keep children away from baseboard and portable heaters.

### Lighters and Matches:

- ▼ Keep lighters and matches out of the sight and reach of children.
- ▼ Install and maintain smoke detectors.
- ▼ For more information on fire prevention, contact your local fire department.

### BBQs:

- ▼ Keep children away from BBQs at all times.
- ▼ Adults and children have died from carbon monoxide poisoning, a colorless, odorless gas, when sleeping in a tent or trailer where smoldering briquettes from the BBQ had been used for warmth.



## HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

Household chemicals such as bleaches, paint thinners and paint removers, oven cleaners, ammonia and abrasive cleaners are among the top household consumer products which cause injuries and deaths in children under the age of five. Because products such as cleaning liquids and powders, polishes and drain cleaners are so common, we forget how dangerous they are. The major hidden hazard for all chemical products is the possible swallowing of the product. However, the splashing of the product in the eyes and on the skin is also important to avoid. Most household chemicals carry symbols and safety warnings on the label. Learn the symbols; follow these five steps to safety:

- Children are curious and move fast. Lock all chemical products out of the sight and reach of children. Household chemical containers, even if sealed or empty, are not toys. Never let children play with them.
- Read the label. If there is anything in the label instructions that you don't understand, ask for help. Make sure the labels on containers are not removed or covered up.
- Keep household chemicals in their original containers. Never mix them together. Some mixtures can produce harmful gases.
- Close the cap on the container tightly even if you set it down for just a moment. Make sure that child-resistant containers are working. Child-resistant does not mean child-proof!
- Teach children that the symbols mean: DANGER! DO NOT TOUCH.







## DROWNINGS

Children love to play in and around water. Every year there are drownings that could have been prevented.

- ◆ *Supervise children in the bathtub. Do not rely on a bathseat to ensure the safety of a young child in a bathtub. The suction cups on the seat might suddenly release, posing a drowning hazard if the child is left unattended.*
- ◆ *Keep small children away from five gallon buckets, diaper pails and other large household containers of water. Toddlers have been known to fall into such products and drown.*
- ◆ *Be sure that the filter for an above-ground pool is located far enough from the pool to prevent a child from climbing on it and falling into the water.*
- ◆ *Be sure that backyard pools are well-enclosed, with a high fence of vertical bars and a gate which is self-closing and self-locking.*
- ◆ *For more information on water safety, contact your nearest branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society.*

## PLAYGROUND AND BACKYARD PLAY EQUIPMENT

### Strangulation Hazards

Children have died when their clothing or drawstrings got caught on playground equipment or on fences. Other children have died when they became entangled on ropes or skipping ropes attached to playground equipment.

- *Never tie mittens or anything else on a cord around a child's neck.*
- *Always take off, tie up or tuck in cords and drawstrings on all clothing.*
- *Always remove ropes and skipping ropes tied to slides and other playground equipment.*



## SECOND-HAND PRODUCTS

If you are thinking of buying a used crib, playpen, stroller or other children's products, or are about to inherit one from family or friends, be careful!

Even if they're only a few years old, some of these items can be in poor condition and dangerous. Be aware that hidden damage to car seats and safety helmets makes these products unsafe.

- Be aware that there are government regulations to ensure the safety of these kinds of items for young children.
- Used cribs, gates, car seats, strollers, or toys may not meet government safety standards.
- Be cautious about buying or accepting these used or hand-me-down articles.
- For more details on safety for cribs, gates, etc., please refer to the specific products listed in this booklet.





## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

- To prevent falls, cuts and other injuries to children, be attentive to a baby placed in a grocery shopping cart.
- Make sure children use helmets while riding their bicycle or playing sports to protect against severe head injuries.
- Be aware of the serious risk of injuries suffered by young children using backyard trampolines. Trampolines should not be considered as toys.
- Children have strangled while playing with window curtain and blind cords. Do not leave blind or drapery cords hanging and do not put a crib or bed near a window with blind cords. Tie, clip or fasten cords out of the reach of children.
- Use plastic safety covers over electrical outlets so that children cannot poke metal objects into them.
- Use interior household paint that is suitable for children's products if you paint children's furniture.
- Choose only water-based arts and crafts materials for use by children.
- Keep glass soft drink bottles away from children. If tipped or dropped, they may explode and cause serious injury.
- Make sure plastic bags are kept out of the reach of children. Children have suffocated when playing with plastic bags.
- Use children's wood sleighs that are equipped with a rigid handle. In some cases, wood sleighs with a flexible rope as a handle do not provide enough control and can tip over without the knowledge of the adult pulling the sleigh.
- It is important to supervise children when travelling or visiting family and friends, especially during holiday celebrations or while vacationing away from home.
- To avoid childhood burns, falls, drownings and strangulation hazards,



**SUPERVISE YOUR CHILD  
WITH LOVING CARE!**

**K**now what safety features to look for when you buy and use consumer products such as toys, equipment or furniture made for babies and young children. Avoid purchasing or using products that have sharp edges or points that can cut a child, small holes where a child's finger could get caught, small parts that can detach easily and get stuck in a child's throat or products that are not stable. The Product Safety Bureau of Health Canada, in consultation with industry, consumers and the medical community, has developed safety regulations and standards for a number of children's products, among them, toys, strollers, cribs, playpens and safety gates.

The Information and Education Program provides helpful information to families, caregivers, daycare centres and health professionals through initiatives such as safety awareness campaigns, posters, pamphlets, as well as videos.

For more information on injury prevention, please contact:

**Information and Education Program  
Environmental Health Directorate  
Health Protection Branch  
Health Canada  
Postal Locator: 0801A  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0L2**

Telephone: (613) 952-1014

Fax: (613) 941-4376

E-Mail: [Carole\\_Lacroix@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:Carole_Lacroix@hc-sc.gc.ca)

For inquiries and complaints on consumer products, please contact your nearest Product Safety office listed below:

**Vancouver, British Columbia**

(604) 666-5003;

**Edmonton, Alberta**

(780) 495-2626;

**Calgary, Alberta**

(403) 292-4677;

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**

(306) 975-4502;

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

(204) 983-5490;

**Hamilton, Ontario**

(905) 572-2845;

**Toronto, Ontario**

(416) 973-4705;

**Ottawa, Ontario**

(613) 952-1014;

**Montreal, Quebec**

(514) 283-5488;

**Quebec City, Quebec**

(418) 648-4327;

**Moncton, New Brunswick**

(506) 851-6638;

**Dartmouth, Nova Scotia**

(902) 426-8300;

**St. John's, Newfoundland**

(709) 772-4050.

Our mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

*Health Canada*

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